

Development, Democracy, and the Art of Trespassing:

Essays in Honor of Albert O. Hirschman

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Some Other Kinds of Otherness: A Critique of "Rational Choice" Theories

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I. Why Loyalty Has a Value

The following episodes are puzzling. A theory is required to explain the facts they describe.

FIRST EPISODE: *Defense expenditures.* A certain country was at war (no nuclear blast was envisaged). Without a very heavy increase in defense spending chances were high that the country would lose the war. For reasons of morale, maybe for fear of revolt, the government agreed upon a referendum that would decide the new tax burden. Were the country to lose the war, she would almost certainly lose independence and her existence as a separate cultural entity. But this was not the first time in history that that country had faced a similar fate, and it was confidently predicted that no more substantial private loss would be suffered by any single citizen in the case of defeat than in the case of victory. Further, the private loss due to the proposed tax burden would be heavier than that expected from the damages of the war. The final figures of the referendum are not known but, as anticipated, some voted in favor of the proposed tax, others voted against. This behavior is complex. We need a theory to explain its occurrence.

Some would suggest that those who voted in favor preferred paying more taxes to having their country lose the war, and that the others preferred the opposite option—and that this, or what can be drawn from this, is theory enough. Revealed preferences are all that there is to argue about social action. This view must be rejected. We need a real theory.

SECOND EPISODE: *A mere name in common.* A political party is very close to coming to power. To form a coalition with other parties, or to enlarge its electoral appeal, important planks of its program must be changed. It is not the first time that this has happened and, added to the previous ones, the new

alterations will not leave much intact of what were the original program and image of the party. If the party upsets the government, its followers will receive many advantages. Social prestige will accrue to the members of the party and economic and administrative spoils will be distributed among the party officers and militants. However, some militants (perhaps some of the founders or very first members of the party) quit, feeling that the party, by so radically changing its program, is now only nominally the party they originally founded, or adhered to. Others remain loyal. This fact again requires explanation.

THIRD EPISODE: *A mere signature.* In the years after Mussolini came to power in Italy, many persons were arrested. One of these was the leader of the Catholic party, De Gasperi; another was the leader of the Communist party, Gramsci. Freedom was offered to both if they petitioned Mussolini for release. De Gasperi signed and went free; Gramsci did not and remained in prison for almost ten years, became ill and died a few months after being released. Some would say that Gramsci was more courageous and strong-willed than De Gasperi. Whether or not this is so is beside the point. I will claim that what is significant is the difference between what signing that petition meant to De Gasperi and what it meant to Gramsci. But this statement advances us only a little. We still need categories of thought that allow us to differentiate the meanings of an act for a person. We also need a theory to explain why certain acts, or the refusal of certain acts, may be of more value to a person than freedom.

FOURTH EPISODE: *Badges of honor.* A country is at war and many of its citizens take part in the battle. Some fight bravely, are wounded and receive medals or other badges of honor. These badges have high value for them and for the persons around them who recognize the importance of the acts for which they were conferred. After the war, the mood of the population changes, the dominant opinion turns against everything linked to the war, and acts of valiancy performed during the war are vilified or belittled rather than held in esteem. So are medals and persons decorated with them. Some of these persons are themselves persuaded of the reasons that lie behind the new public opinion, and their own view of their past actions conforms to the new mood. Others are not and together with like-minded persons form associations and movements. Within these new circles medals and the acts that they symbolize have value, and the persons who have performed those acts derive prestige from them and are gratified by the recognition of which they are the object. Now there are two groups of persons: they have all performed the same type of acts and won the same type of rewards for those

acts, but the persons in one group value those rewards in a way different from the persons in the other group. It may well be not unusual that somebody sells certain goods and receives an amount of money in a certain currency, while somebody else receives the equivalent amount in a different currency; then the first currency is devalued, while the second is not and the two sellers find themselves at the end with different amounts of rewards. But for the case of the badges of honor, the currency was the same for all. These facts need explaining.

These facts are about countries at war, political parties, ideologies, badges of honor: it seems that in each case a theory of loyalty is needed and one such theory is Albert Hirschman's (1970, 77 ff.). In it, loyalty is a special attachment to an organization which makes exit from that organization less likely. Hirschman argues further that loyalty gives more scope to voice, which is the activity aimed at influencing the decisions of the organization. These two circumstances have important consequences. Since it is likely that the most active and influential members of an organization have more attachment and are more loyal to it, and hence will incur a higher personal cost for leaving it, the presence of loyalty will prevent the exit of the members that the organization needs most. Loyalty is specially needed, that is, "its role as a barrier to exit can be constructive... when organizations are close substitutes, so that a small deterioration of one of them will send customers-members scurrying to the other." (Hirschman 1970, 81).

So far, the theory assumes that an organization includes two classes of members:

- a) the "*low-loyalty*" members, for whom exit is practically costless;
- b) the "*high-loyalty*" members, for whom exit is *subjectively* difficult, hence costly; these are likely to be "locked" in their organization a little longer.

But the theory also states that the barrier to exit constituted by loyalty is of finite height. When the "*Bauchschmerzen*" of the loyal member become too acute, he will exit. On the other hand, he will also be the first to re-enter when the organization improves according to his wishes. This to-and-fro implies that the organization goes on working even when its most loyal members have abandoned it and, therefore, that a third layer of members exists, who are assumed never to leave either because for them exit is inconceivable, or because if they leave, the organization ceases to exist. These are:

- c) the "*identifiers*," for whom exit is not conceivable and for whom the barrier to exit is, as it were, of infinite height.

This development of the theory is unexpected and paradoxical. It seems, however, irresistible. Hirschman's theory aimed originally at explaining "the decline in firms, organizations and States" and the response to it: to this end, the development I propose is redundant. But the episodes I set forth above have a wider scope. They call for an extension of this theory of loyalty.

It will help to examine why the loyal member "feels that leaving a certain group carries a high price for it" (Hirschman 1970, 98). Why has loyalty a value? It seems that an answer can be given if the nature of the "identifiers" is unriddled. If the identifiers leave, the group (the organization, etc.) ceases to exist as such. This case is not difficult to conceive: the owners of a firm may sell it or go bankrupt, the core leaders of an association may decide to dissolve it. But the existence of a group or of a relation, as such, may also represent a *subjective* end for a member. When an "identifier" leaves a group, the group ceases to exist *for him*. The identifier is clearly different from the loyal member. The *loyal* member leaves an organization when he does not receive from it what he desires. He feels that the organization still delivers the same kind of goods, only of a lesser quality. He threatens to leave and if the threat has no effect he leaves. If the services of the organization improve, he may re-enter. A member is *loyal* to a certain group (and he may be loyal to many groups at once, if they do not compete) because he approves of the goals of the group. A member *identifies* himself in a group not for a specific end, but for this collective reality, and thus receives from it his own identity. He will leave not when the organization is inefficient, but when it has become for him a different entity. He will leave when the identity of the organization has changed. He will not care, then, whether the organization totally deteriorates; on the contrary, this will only prove his case. This is true of one who has lost his faith. Whereas the loyal member may bargain about his own leaving, the identifier cannot. The faithful cannot threaten to lose her faith, the lover to cease to be in love. These threats would not be credible. They would be threats against oneself. Once the identity, the faith, or the love are lost, then a new person is born. If some attachment returns, it will be for some new identity, some new faith, some new lover, even if these bear, for the sake of registration, the same names.

But we can fully understand the nature of identification only when we consider the other side. If the identifier leaves, he himself ceases to exist.¹

¹ This makes the reasons for identification of two kinds. For the one, the organization cannot exist without the identifier, for the other, the identifier cannot exist without the organization. It is an important distinction, but not relevant for the arguments I am developing here.

This case seems to refer to terroristic organizations of a sort which kill their members when they leave. But we do not need to go so far. A person who leaves a group can become a "different person." This seems to be said merely figuratively. But suppose that the habits, the values, the beliefs, in a word, the order of the preferences by which that person was known, and by which his actions and reactions could be, more or less accurately, anticipated by those who had to deal with him, are radically altered. Should not an observer be led to conclude that, for what concerns him, that person is another person? Of course, body and memory would continue to appear more or less the same. For some this is an important fact, but not for those who believe that people can be understood only as rational choosers. For, what is the use of having the same body and the same memories if what distinguishes a person are the criteria he uses in his choices and evaluations, and these are no longer the same?²

To look insightfully at this last point, we now turn to the Fifth Episode.

FIFTH EPISODE: *Proust and the lover.*

Our dread of a future in which we must forego the sight effaces, the sound of voices, that we love, friends from whom we derive today our keenest joy, this dread, far from being dissipated, is intensified if to the grief of such a privation we reflect that there will be added what seems to us in anticipation an even more cruel grief: not to feel it as a grief at all—to remain indifferent: for if that should occur, our self would then have changed. It would be in a real sense the death of ourselves, a death followed, it is true, by a resurrection, but in a different self, the life, the love of which are beyond the reach of those elements of the existing self that are doomed to die ...³

Why is it that not to feel a grief can be "an even more cruel grief" than to feel it? How can one go about one's actions if an anticipated contentment is a state to be avoided? "We are incapable, while we are in love, of acting as fit predecessors of the next persons who, when we are in love no longer, we shall presently have become ..." Our future selves may indeed be other persons.

2 In other words, the question here is about the social identity of the person, not the identity of the mind. Elster's objection (unpublished, p. 9) confuses the two questions.

3 I owe the rereading of these passages of Proust to their quotation in Parfit, 1984, pp. 305.

A person becomes a different person, a self becomes a different self, when the group, the couple, the organization or the movement which bore out the values that allowed that person to act, to choose, to judge of persons or ideas in a certain way, to feel certain emotions, does not exist any longer *for him*. This is because it seems difficult to hold values, to be gratified by rewards, to enjoy satisfactions, without referring to other individuals who are able to *recognize* those values, rewards, satisfactions, and to respond in some terms to them. Propose this pact: that an individual would receive everything he wants in money or goods, on the condition that he should not have any human contact any longer in his life. Few, probably none, would accept.

II. Identity and Free-riding

Loyalty can therefore be understood as a degree of identification. One identifies with a group to the highest degree when the cost of one's acting together with others for the same collective end is zero. From this point the value of voice decreases. Indeed, since voice must be understood as collective action meant to produce a public good (a specific policy, a more efficient organization, etc.), participation in it has been shown to be irrational. The rational course of action, when a public good is needed, would be to ride free, stay put, and enjoy the benefits brought about by the action of others. But many do act collectively, protests are expressed, individuals spend money, time and effort, to bring about situations whose benefits they could enjoy at no costs. It is time to explain this contradiction.

Hirschman proposes that "it is in the nature of the public good, or the 'public happiness,' that striving for it cannot be neatly separated from possessing it" (Hirschman 1970, 216). There should be no cost in "voicing" therefore, but rather pleasure. Why so? Because, when a desired policy is not easy to bring about, the next best thing to having that policy is "striving for it." This "strange transformation of means into ends," Hirschman says, is due to the painful presence of uncertainty. When the outcome is uncertain, at least anticipation in the collective action aiming at bringing that outcome about does appear certain; and this certainty "negates the uncertainty about the desired outcome" (Hirschman 1970, 216). If this is a realistic description of a mental state, it is of one we generally call "self-deception." Is self-deception always needed to generate collective action? We ought to look closely at the whole question.

Discontented members of an organization can resort either to voice or to exit. Voice is more likely, says Hirschman, when things like health or safety are at stake. Deterioration in the taste of a firm's food, or an unattractive design in a car will give rise to exit, but health hazards or safety problems will bring out voice. Voice seems to be linked with concern with people's fate. This concern makes people act together with others who wholly or partially share that fate. Should they forgo that collective concern, they feel they will lose control over that fate and will become something different, maybe something less, than what they were before. This they do not want.

The following example will make my point clearer.

Suppose you are a member of a linguistic minority. There are demonstrations to obtain the status of official language for your tongue. Participation seems to you too costly and you refrain from it as from other forms of collective action aimed at that objective. Suppose also that you speak only your language and that the status of official language for it would facilitate several operations in your daily life and that this is what you were really interested in. Your not acting collectively is a rational decision since you will obtain your benefits if the rest of the community will. If you take part in the action, your personal contribution will not affect the outcome, and you will incur costs for no added benefit. But suppose instead that you speak both languages and that no personal advantage derives to you from the official status granted to the language of your minority group. This status has only a symbolic value to you: It is meant to be a protection against the extinction of a community of speakers who, by using that language, preserve an identity you cherish. Thus you will continue to sort out things and to understand persons through values you know will be recognized. These values would be lessened and your recognitions jeopardized, if you remain estranged from the collective action. Participation in it, not the outcome of it, is needed for confirmation of your collective identity and of the renewed efficacy of the circle of persons within which you can continue to act and continue to be seen as the same person. This cannot be taken to be the "next best thing to having the desired measure." It is a state of affairs altogether different from the outcome the action is intended to bring about.

There is irony here. Staying put, letting others act, is the right choice when your interests are affected; being active, participating in collective endeavours, is correct when your interests are *not* affected. But consider. When a public good is the only goal of a collective action, you can ride free because you are, without threat or need for reconfirmation, one of those who will be entitled to the consumption of the produced good; playing in the part, driving in the street, being protected from invaders by your national army or

from thieves by your local police. You *already are* a member of the union which is negotiating the agreement that will bring about higher wages for you even if you do not strike, or of the group of firms which will obtain a protectionist measure and be protected from an association to which you do not pay your dues. What is at stake in these cases of collective action is whether you will or will not receive a certain benefit, and *not* whether you belong or do not belong to the right collectivity, have or have not the required identity. Were this an outcome of the action, then you would have to participate in it if you wanted that outcome. This class of outcomes we may call the forming, or confirming, of collective identities. Of these outcomes it can be said further:

a) That they may, or may not, be willed as such by the participants. An old union militant may clearly expect that a strike will not succeed in obtaining a wage increase, but that a stronger solidarity and a confirmation of collective identity will result from that action. The young union member will start by wrongly believing in the possibility of success; and will end up belonging to a more solidaristic group.

b) That they do not belong to the class of "process benefits." These are the benefits an agent receives from performing the action. It is in the nature of any benefit to be comparable, at least nominally, with other benefits. Not so with what we call an identity. I have no way of knowing whether a person is better or worse off when one or another identity can be attributed to him. Some will say that he has chosen to act together with those persons and no others and this is a proof of a revealed preference. It is not. The forming of the collective identity was not the objective he pursued.

c) That they do not belong to the class of "aggregation" or "emergent" effects, although they seem to belong to this class because they are often unintended. But aggregation effects are the property of a system. They are brought about by non-concerted, although inter dependent actions. They can be measured only by an observer who possesses criteria for tracing in a certain way the boundaries of the observable system. The forming of identity instead modifies the individual agent. It is the outcome of a process that at the same time brings about the system of recognition of that identity, and hence possesses meaning for the agent as well as for the observer.

d) That they explain collective action in a way and in cases in which selective incentives (in an Olsonian sense) do not. Often collective action takes place without selective incentives being present. A different explanation is therefore needed. Even when selective incentives are present, it

is unlikely that they can explain lasting collective action. Given their individual nature, they are unequally distributed. Individual goals will therefore emerge that will conflict with each other and hamper collective action. If this lasts, it can only be because the action is becoming an end in itself for the new identities it is forming. Or, as in the case of rites and ceremonies, because collective experience shows them to be necessary for a reconfirmation of collective identity.

Still I can see some difficulty in the argument. Let me postpone it for the moment and return briefly to another theory of loyalty to which Hirschman refers.

It seems that one can make sense of loyalty by considering it a function of the investment a person makes in the group to which he becomes loyal. The higher the investment a person feels was needed for entering into the group, the stronger his loyalty to the group will be. This is the reason behind groups requiring severe initiation, clubs requiring higher fees for membership, tribes requiring painful rites of passage. In these cases, the person performs acts that do not seem to be in his own interest, rather than leaving the group, betraying it, infringing its norms. It is as if remaining loyal adds a value to actions that can be considered loyal. If this value is produced by a past action that the person does not want to disown, we conclude that in this disowning resides the negative value, in the appropriation of the past action resides that positive value. Continuity of the self, i.e., personal identity subjectively felt, is here the reason for action.

This interpretation is very close to, but not the same as, the explanation given by the theory of cognitive dissonance, which deals technically with this type of episode. It is not the same because in that theory what becomes a negative, unbearable, state of the subject is the dissonance between a belief and an action, or between two beliefs when at least one of them is expressed (which makes it an action).⁴ I find the notion of a dissonance between a belief and an action rather unclear, because it is based on a comparison between objects of different nature. My interpretation points to an inconsistency between objects of the same nature. These objects are the criteria that the person applies in orienting his actions. When the criteria appear to be inconsistent (or merely "different") then the identity of the person through time seems to have broken down. Or, in other words, when the self must make a decision, an open awareness that the criteria he is using are not the same as those that some of his former selves applied in the past threatens the

⁴ Many well known experiments illustrate this theory (cf. Abelson 1968. Also Pears 1982).

perception of continuity in time that seems necessary to evaluate the consequences of any decision.

The theory behind this second view of loyalty, therefore, is consistent with the one I propounded in the first view. The value of loyalty depends on the degree of identification it expresses.

III. The Boundaries of Identity

We are able to see now at least one element that the episodes described in the first part of this article have in common. They all deal with persons who seem to have the alternative of choosing either some private utility of their own, or the commitment to some collective (even a dyadic) identity (sacrifice for one's nation or one's party, fidelity to one's ideal, solidarity with one's comrades). This is, however, not the real alternative because if persons act, they always act with reference to some identity.

Consider, first, the distinction between an identity which appears exclusive and an identity which appears to leave open further choices, as in the case of the so-called "symbolic goods." Imagine, again, the members of a minority being offered the right to have an educational system teaching their language, or, as an alternative, a program of substantial investments that will make each member of their families perceptibly wealthier. Or imagine the employees of an organization being offered the abolition of badges and rituals differentiating superior from inferior functions, or, as an alternative, a raise in wages. In these two cases, the first offer may be called symbolic, the second monetary. In both cases, the symbolic offer (transmitting one's language; being free from organizational humiliation) can be received and consumed only if the collective identity in question is maintained and felt relevant. The second terms of the two alternatives refer to monetary goods. It seems that they can be enjoyed individually, and can be evaluated in terms of the maximization of utilities, without further reference to some collective identity. But can they? Suppose that a further clause is stipulated, the already mentioned clause of the suspension of all possible identification: that the persons receiving the increase in income spend the rest of their lives with no human contact (all services would be provided, sexual satisfaction would be granted at will but with no social communication, and freedom of movement, wherever no human being is to be found, would be absolute). These have been called "robinsonades." We cannot take seriously the possibility that a benefit be enjoyed "individually." This is only the impression one receives when a benefit is paid in money. Although impression one receives when a benefit is paid in money. Although it is a symbol, money seems to have had

the effect of making compatible the most diverse identifications, that is, to make possible the transfer of individuals from one to another collectivity, and their keeping of membership in several. Being a generalized symbol, it is recognized almost everywhere, and a person with money can move from circle to circle with the assurance of being recognized. Not always, though, as can be seen in the following episode.

SIXTH EPISODE: *Reductio ad Amazoniam*. A wealthy businessman, alone in his own private plane, lands among an Amazonian tribe. He is obliged to spend the rest of his life there. So far his life had been a succession of rational choices oriented by expected utilities. The wealth he had accumulated was recognized on any market, except by savages. This person was what the succession of his rational choices had made him to be. Now nothing has changed in him, nonetheless he must become another person. From now on he will be recognized in a different way, by people who pay attention to different values, who look for different signs to construct the identity of a person. Maybe the best capital that that businessman has brought along with him is some ill-defined skill, a by-product of some unsuccessful rational calculation: the capacity of recognizing the unexpected otherness of human beings.

This case seems unrealistic, absurd. I have placed in operation a *reductio ad Amazoniam*. But it helps to show that even the most widely recognized currency, that which is valid on the economic market, might be refused recognition. In our daily life, we operate in much narrower systems of exchange, dealing with currencies which are person-specific and which only small groups of people are willing to recognize: prestige, trust, courage, capacity for affection, friendship or solidarity. We repeatedly experience small, but sorrowful *reductions ad Amazoniam*, sudden falls from seemingly well-secured states of recognition, sudden plunges into new tribes, sudden perceptions of the absurdity of our calculations.

IV. Uncertainty and the String of Selves

In some of the cases I have so far imagined people were confronted with situations of uncertainty. People were uncertain, or became aware that they should have been uncertain, about what *their own evaluation* of the states of the world, and hence of their own interests, would become. This uncertainty, however, was not about future states of the world, but about future states of the evaluating self. This was so because the future states of the self were seen, or should have been seen, as dependent on the recognition, by

some other selves, of the validity of the criteria by which the states of the world would be evaluated.

It will help now to restate the whole question. I have claimed that any theory that explains social action in terms of rational choice must be self-defeating. A person who chooses "rationally" must be able to evaluate the consequences of his choice in terms of his own interests. But, first, the interests of his own self *now* are not the same as those of his future selves. One *now* would prefer to smoke rather than to refrain from smoking, but this is probably not in the interest of some future self who, when he comes about, would prefer to be healthier. Or one would prefer to enjoy good food and go to the movies now, rather than buying stocks, but this is not in the interest of some future self who probably would enjoy eating good food and wearing new clothes that he could have afforded had his predecessor saved money instead of spending it. We may imagine some umpire, some super-self, allotting benefits with equal concern for the different successive selves.⁵ But then we should also have to imagine this super-self possessing rules of distribution that are constant in time, or which change predictably.

A similar assumption is needed to take care of change in values. The consequences of a certain choice made by me now will occur when my way of ordering preferences has changed. In the future a certain self of mine will rate the badges of honor, the fidelity to certain ideals, the solidarity of certain friends or comrades, the love of a certain lover, with weights different from the ones that have led me to sacrifice other goods. The principle of rationality requires us to anticipate the utility of the choices we make. The anticipation may take place under conditions of incomplete information about the occurrence of certain events, but of this we may take care with the weighting, objective or subjective, of the chances of the occurrence of those events. When one is anticipating consequences, however, he must also consider that these will not be consequences for the choosing self, but for a successive one. And since comparing utilities inter-temporally is as arbitrary as comparing them interpersonally, normally a state of choice is a state of uncertainty about how a future self will evaluate the situation in which the choice made now is placing it.

This type of uncertainty (let us call it "value uncertainty") is different from the uncertainty considered by the theory of probability. There is however, an analogy in the procedure to overcome both. Uncertainty exists when situations are too unique to form in any way groups of instances of sufficient homogeneity to make possible a quantitative determination of true

5 See Schelling 1984; Elster 1979.

probability. To overcome this situation one must form groups of instances and then proceed to evaluate, subjectively, or by calculating frequencies, the probability of occurrences of those instances. In "value uncertainty" one must also create a sort of regrouping. One must form "groups of selves."

Remember the fourth and fifth episodes. They dealt with persons who seemed to have lost the values which had previously helped them make important choices. Those persons had lost their values because these had ceased to be recognized as such by the group, or collective entity, to which those persons belonged. Other persons had kept those values as working values by reconstituting situations in which they continued to be recognized. If a person can be assured that he will perpetuate his belonging to the group of persons which will hold the same values with respect to a certain class of choices or, in other words, if he thinks that his future selves will all belong to that group of selves to which his own current self now belongs, there is no reason for him to suffer from uncertainty.

The argument so far follows from the above mentioned impossibility of comparing the utilities of different selves inter-temporally. The special condition that allows a comparison of some sort to be drawn is the constitution of a state of identity of a person through time. This state depends on the stability of what could be called a "circle of recognition." What this "circle" is required to recognize are the values that a person is using in his choices which make him a certain recognizable, self-identical agent.

Suppose that I am anxious about a decision I have to make. I am anxious because of what may become of me if I fail. What kind of sanctions will fall upon me? How will I bear them? These and other concerns that the uncertainty about my action provokes in me amount to one essential question: Who will recognize me and how will I be valued? If some stability of the circle(s) of recognition around me is secured, possible failure does not make me anxious. If no stability is in view success will not gratify me, in fact I will not be able to gauge it. We must conclude that uncertainty about one's action amounts to uncertainty about the stability of one's circle(s) of recognition.

To negate anxiety due to value uncertainty one may resort to action directly aimed at preserving or forming a circle of recognition. This is the type of collective action that, as was demonstrated, does not allow free-riding.

It now becomes easy to understand how a certain conception of personal identity goes together with the idea of a circle of recognition. A person is a succession of choosing selves that may have something in common only if they are located in a common circle of recognition. Personal identity consists in some inter-temporal, vertical connectedness among

successive selves of a human being that is made possible only by some interpersonal, horizontal, connectedness among different individual selves.

We may imagine a univocally achieved full personal identity as a limiting case, when a sort of absolute identification of a person with a collectivity is taking place. This person's ends are the ends of the collectivity, the person itself is no more than an instrument in view of those ends. Analogously, the current self is no more than an instrument in view of the ends of future selves, those who will consume and enjoy the fulfilment of the ends pursued by the collectivity. There is here full integration, both horizontal and vertical, collective and personal. Economists speak of "time preference" when the deciding self favors its closest successors: The further ahead in time the selves of a person lie, the less their interests weigh for the deciding self. But in the case of the fully integrated self the opposite is true. The curve of the discount rate is flat or, rather, negative. Some future self dictates choices; no weakness of the will is allowed, the current self is responsible to some future self as it is to the collective will from which the secure recognition proceeds.

I have described a limiting case. Real cases are located at a certain distance from it. But this limiting case is assumed as the norm by several ideological conceptions of society. Consider revolutionary ideologies or religions of salvation. In them, the "true" interests of a person are his long-term interests—the interests of his future selves, and to them the deciding self must sacrifice immediate benefits. These long-term interests coincide with the interests of the collectivity within which the individual forms his values and acts.

But consider also the constitutional ideology of liberalism and the practice of representative government derived from it. According to this practice, a representative does not represent the interests of his constituency but the interests of the nation. His electors cannot bring him to court on the ground that he has not fulfilled his mandate. He is not an attorney on behalf of his electors, as the representatives in pre-liberal parliaments could be considered to be. His mandate is defined by the furtherance of the interest of the Nation, or of the People, in general. This principle seems to be at odds with the majority principle. If the interest of the People were the interests of its majority, the single representative should be free to represent particular interests (and not be sued if he receives payments from them). But this is not so and, contrary to appearances, there is no contradiction. The principle of representation implies a unified state. A state is like a person, it is composed of successive selves, of successive generations of selves. The currently deciding selves may be divided about what course of action to take. But if they act as members of a state, if they act through a political institution, they

are supposed to be divided not about their particular immediate interest, but about opinions of what their "true" interest as members of a collectivity, which includes present and future selves, present and future generations, could be. This is why the principle of majority rule among interests cannot hold. Changing and non-represented interests of successive selves must be interpreted. The process of representation in the modern state is assumed, by the constitutional doctrine, to be about the interpretation of the collective identity of the nation.

As political institutions operate assuming and assuring the identity of persons in time, so do other institutions. Consider the notion of legal responsibility. A person—a succession of selves—will receive just deserts for the decision of some past self. This is judged right and proper. It is probably only expedient for the sake of deterrence or for the higher probability that the future selves of the person who has committed a crime have of committing some crime again. Legal systems also know statutes of limitations. For certain crimes, a distant successor cannot be held responsible for a crime committed by a past self. On the other side, legal systems impute responsibility for past selves also to selves that are not physically connected, as in cases of inheritance.

Like the law, morality holds future selves responsible for past selves. But morality also knows confession, contrition, conversion. These are cases in which existing identities are interrupted, or new identities constituted.

In the view I have held here, social action is not the product of selves maximizing instantaneous satisfaction nor of selves devising strategies aimed at procuring benefits for future selves or future generations of selves. It is rather the product of selves aiming at securing horizontal ties with selves of other persons or vertical ties with future selves. Persons, are indeterminate, as nations and parties and movements are. This means that our commitments are uncertain and have to be continuously renewed. For the group of disappointed founders in our second episode, there is no sure way of knowing whether their party is always the same party or not, and whether they have to stay or leave it. Nor is there a sure way for me to know whether the friend who asks me to lend him some money because he cannot stand one minute more without heroin is the same person who asked me a few hours ago not to lend him money whatever he would ask, and hence to know whether the commitment I took with that previous self holds for the new one.⁶

Is the view that individual action has its end in the formation of social ties more likely to clarify social facts than the view that individual action has

its end in the satisfaction of utilities? To this last view it is objected that either it has to rest on the unempirical notion of happiness, or that, if it is conceived as being expressed in preferences, it becomes tautological. Not to be such, it has to assume the pre-existence of certain structures. For instance, a world of pre-labelled objects, within which preferences can be ordered in a transitive way. But of these structures no theory can be formed using the concept of utility.

When I think on the other hand of interpersonal or inter-temporal connectedness among selves, I can think of ties forming structures, and these structures I can describe and classify. When I read Hirschman's propositions on exit and voice, I understand them as actions constituting or dissolving horizontal, interpersonal ties. They form examples of how to distinguish structures that can be understood through the logic of identity. Hirschman's reasoning employs the logic of utility. But I have shown above that certain of the phenomena he discovers imply that a logic of identity is at work.

As Hirschman built a typology of structures according to the effects they were likely to have on the strengthening or weakening of the *interpersonal* connectedness of selves, one may ask how the *inter-temporal* connectedness of selves may be reflected in types of social structures. Consider a traditional family, a productive organization and a religious sect. These are three types of structures which can ensure to the individual some personal identity. But the relative position of the deciding self with regard to its predecessors and successors will be different in the three cases. In the traditional family the ancestors are important, inherited culture and property are important, prescriptions absorbed by the young are important. The past selves command the deciding selves; the important collectivity of selves to which to refer is located in the past. In an occupational role the deciding self is future oriented, but what he received from past selves (his education, experience, formation of skills) still counts. In a religious sect, in a "belief group," in which persons are undergoing conversion, or second birth, the past is negated, every decision is taken for the sake of the future selves that will live in eternal salvation. The future selves command the deciding self.

It can be surmised that these different ways of achieving identity are not unrelated. The command of future selves becomes probably more encompassing when the hold of the past selves grows weaker. In other words, when the personal identity anchored in the past provides the deciding self with less and less security of recognition -from the people among whom he must act, new identities grounded in common future destinies are sought. When the traditional circles of recognition are stable, when identity is secure, there is no need to resort to future selves to settle our standards of action for today.

6 For similar arguments see Parfit 1984.

If my criteria of choice are well rooted in the patterns of recognition both of a long string of ancestral selves having built family identity for generations, and of a contemporary family of selves sharing the same past selves, and if this vertical and horizontal stability of recognition does not seem to be touched by larger historical movements, it is unlikely that I shall vote for an increase of expenditure to defend a national identity which is not relevant for that security of recognition. Or if I am a member of several groups from which I draw recognition for the success of my choices, it is unlikely that I will be so concerned by the loss of identity of my political party or for the loss of meaning of some badge of honor I have received in the past. If a movement is young and precarious, and if all the tension of its action is toward creating ideal conditions for future selves, it is likely that I have joined it knowing that I am adopting an exclusive identity, that in it my present self counts merely as a tool for future selves, that my membership is continuously threatened by alternative possibilities, and that a mere signature can be for me a symbol of total abdication. If a movement is old, has undergone much change and many compromises, but still keeps a relevant connectedness with the past and a recognizable identity, it is likely that I feel that temporary weakness will also be absorbed in that long-lasting identity.

The previous hypotheses help explain why strong ideological commitments are in general meant to overcome a state of weakness. Ideology defines the optimal state for future selves, for the person and for the collectivity, and subjects current action to the achievement of that state. It therefore organizes action, individual and collective, tightly and instrumentally. Identity through time will be securely defined by the standards of recognition anticipated for the future selves. Ideological commitment is like intense and concentrated investment in a developing country. It operates by sacrificing a stretch of selves and concentrating on chosen one, because identity is secured and hence the connectedness between the sacrificed and the chosen selves is not in doubt. The efficacy of action led by ideology is therefore strongly enhanced and weak persons or weak groups can thus face strong enemies or difficult passages. People cannot act without an identity. When nobody questions the one they have received, they use it; when this is threatened or worn out, without even being aware of it, they first for one.

Romantic love is also a form of ideology which strengthens dyadic identity by letting the state of future selves and the condition of their reciprocal recognition determine the view of the current selves. This seems imperative when the deciding self becomes responsible for its decision now for future selves. It was not the case in the traditional family, where past selves set the conditions for the choice. In romantic love a new identity

through time is grounded, and this helps to overcome the uncertainty surrounding a decision that was traditionally made by the family of origin, a collectivity whose identity was not, or only slightly, threatened by the decision.

Conclusions

It seems that if one holds this view, one can explain facts and relations between facts that were explained only ad hoc, or left unexplained. But I am also interested in widening or clarifying awareness of the significance of certain facts.

If I know that the meaning of my action is not the acquisition of utilities but the securing of recognition, then I will hold the use of categories like "altruism" and "egoism" as merely stereotypical and deeply undiscerning.

I will also more easily understand the reasons that lead me to perform acts that cannot be calculated—like voting or contributing to causes. These reasons are not of a different nature from those that lead me to calculate the best means for some ends. Behind both types of reasons there is always the common need of securing recognition for the identity of my successive selves.

When someone speaks of self-interest, I will be aware of how muddled this notion is. Of whose interests is he thinking? Of the self he is now? Of some future selves of his? Of the bundle of selves with whom his current self is tightly connected? I will also know that the "selves" of that "interest" are so dispersed that no one of them, nor of those of some other string, can ever assume to be the "best judge."

This is a refreshing thought. A too fierce self-reliance can be scary or pretentious. The principle of autonomy of self, if it is not meant to operate temporarily, cannot stand alone and not be a sham. Behind "autonomy" some other self recognizing me is necessary. I now know that beyond every decision of my current self, "some other kind of otherness" must be sought.⁷

7 Whatever view we hold, it must be shown Why every lover has a wish to make
Some other kind of otherness his own Perhaps, in fact, we never are alone. W. H.
Auden

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